The potential of the school for the future. Analysis of the Romanian school and institutional development strategies

Adela Mihaela TARANU, Andrei TARANU

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Abstract

The relevance of education for the future is one of the critical elements in discussing the quality of education and announces "the third wave of education" (Cheng, 2000) - a new trend for future reforms concerning quality education, defined as a link between education and the needs of future individuals and communities to meet the challenges of the new millennium. Based on these considerations, we intend to investigate the potential of the Romanian school for the future in terms of the degree in which, as a result of the compulsory education reform, it has taken localization and globalization in hand, at the conceptual and factual level. In this respect, we have opted for this institutional analysis, a qualitative method that will not allow us to give verdicts; instead we can guide the formulation of hypotheses and development strategies based on contextual features. We are interested in underlining the extent to which educational policy decisions have generated a profiling context of a school connected to the global dynamics and open to the local community, as well as in identifying the factors of the internal and external organizational environment that enhance or block this assertion of the school.

Keywords: school; institutional analysis; educational management; SWOT and TWOS matrix; organizational strategies.

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Introduction

The educational society, the knowledge based economy and the information based technology brings today stringent requests concerning the redefinition of purposes and practices in order to provide their relevance for the future. As it has already been emphasized in the documents concerning the policies of actors at the global level (UNESCO, OECD, European Commission, World Bank), in the social context of the new millennium, the human nature will be a complete personality– from many points of view: technologic, economic, as a social person, as a political person, as a cultural person and as a person who learns – in a multicultural global community with information and a high technology (Campbell, Baikaloff and Power, 2006; Cojocaru, 2005). Both human beings and society need multiple developments in these fields, thus the necessity for a continuous learning and an educational society.

The international organizations and governments are interested in the insurance of the relevance of education through reforms for the future in a context where it is ever harder to anticipate future. The main forces which dynamize future has always been globalization and localization and education and school cannot avoid the effects of this confrontation. A thorough analysis of the process of educational globalization (Țăranu, 2009) reveals the fact that, even if the effects of globalization on education took place later compared to the impact on the political, economic, technical and cultural levels, the localization of education – from a referential as well as a decisional point of view – stands out as an effect of globalization and a condition of its humanization.

At school level, the relevance of education for the future becomes one of the critical factors in the discussion of the quality of the educational process (Cheng, 2005). He sets forth a theoretical model in which three main perspectives – individualization, localization and globalization – are well correlated at the educational level. As concepts, the three terms have not been accepted by specialists yet, most definitions being in fact an enumeration of phenomena and characteristics associated with them (Țăranu & Costea, 2010: 462). We retain as useful for our study the statement that the educational individualization/localization/globalization refers to the circuit, adaptation and development of values, knowledge, technology and norms of behaviour so that they might correspond to the needs and individual characteristics in a local context or at a global level (Cheng, 2000).

The division of these perspectives by positing them in dichotomy entails risks which a responsible society cannot take. Thus, the excessive individualization of education in the context of the growing access to various autonomous means of learning may turn auto-didacticism from a competence into a tool of isolation. On the other hand, the disregard of globalization leads to the isolation of individuals

and nations in the context of global interdependency and reduces the chances for school and education to answer adequately to real challenges. The fact that school assumes the local community perspective on education answers the need to insure the values of solidarity, integrity and alterity and represents a form of protection against the risks of cultural globalization. It is obvious that "the development cannot be discussed from punctual terms, using only one type of action or strategic resource – we must accept the diversity of resources, the multitude of frontiers and the mixture of strategies". (Neamțu, 2009: 74) so that education and school alone even less, cannot do everything. The roles of all the important actors in education should be redefined and for this "it is essential to promote endogenous development - from below - and comprehensive project management participation through innovative and creative formulas for local partnership, capable of con-verging capabilities and values of sustainable development in a globalized com-petition that goes beyond economics, as the only value, and seeping into all areas of our lives (structures, relationships, personal imaginary collective)" (Pastor Seller E., 2011: 8). We believe that the model of multiplication of perspectives in education represents, leaving aside the challenge which might be too big for the decisional level and practitioners, at least a prospective exercise compulsory for those involved in the projection of the educational system. Having these grounds as a starting point, we have developed an approach that looks into the institutional profile of elementary and secondary school in Romania from the viewpoint of the degree to which school may support change and development both at a local and at a global level. We have been interested in underscoring the elements of identity, the internal and external conditions that may enhance or hinder the development of school as an educational place relevant for the future. In defining the potential of school for the future, we have "narrowed" down our analysis to the localization-globalization dimension, considering the perspective of the individualization of education as being well assumed by school, this institution being in itself a space of socialization. From a methodological point of view, we have decided on a SWOT institutional analysis, a qualitative method which does not allow verdicts but which can orient the formulation of hypotheses and the development strategies starting from contextual characteristics. In order to have a more complete and representative imagine of the Romanian school, we have taken into account three types of schools – elementary schools from the urban space, elementary schools from the rural space and high schools and vocational schools from the urban space. In the end, the analysis reports offered us the opportunity to draw the identity of each sub sample in accordance with the definitive elements in our research. Moreover, we have taken into account the formative valences of this method in the domain of institutional development (Cojocaru, 2008: 47) and the feed-back we have received confirms the fact that our analysis has become an important resource for the organizational change management.

Premises offered by educational policies

The Romanian education reform process, that had a very difficult start and was long targeted for corrective and survival strategies of the system under the pressure of concrete problems, has clearly increased in recent years. The effects obtained in previous years at the curriculum level, of teaching materials, evaluation procedures, or at management level, were used as a result of asserting new priorities, among which making from school a public space designed to promote the values of fairness, human cohesion, human mobility and learning how to live in common hold an important place (MECI, 2009).

The year 1996 has reopened interrogations of the Romanian Educational System and, after a short time, the Ministry of National Education made an explicit option, for the first time since 1989 (the year of Romania's emersion from communist regime), for a "comprehensive reform, consistently designed, which repositions the teacher, the student and the pupil and which involves curricula, a reform, in any case of actual change and not just to avoid the risks, a reform of content that, in certain aspects may last, but which starts now" (Marga,1998) which must capitalize the viable tradition of Romanian education, to provide compatibility with European education performance and organizations and to make it fit to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. This major project of changing the education had to overcome many obstacles. Among them there was the lack of economic premises (extended privatization), administrative premises (decentralization), moral premises (confidence in values and principles) and managerial competencies to announce the end of the de-structuring period of time in the education reform (corrective and zonal reform) and the start of the unitary reform. In this respect, the diagnosis given by the European Commission (1999, Agenda 2000) accurately pointed out the major sources affecting the success of the education reform: the low level of government funds provided for the maintenance and improvement of educational infrastructure, weak institutional capacity of the Ministry of Education in the implementation of reforms and resistance to change manifested at the national and local level. These are actually the main risks of educational strategies guided too much by considerations of the market as those of the World Bank - the main "shareholder" of reform in Romania over a long period: the inability to dissociate finances from defining educational options and the weak association of all those interested in formulating educational policies (Torres, C.A., 2007, McGinn, 2000). There have been identified such issues of suiting the education to a society based on individual freedom, market economy, values competition, law-state and political pluralism, such as system centralism, egalitarianism, populism, absence of institutional autonomy, non-correlation of the educational qualifications with the labor market, social and cultural life, un-customized training trails and unequal opportunities to access education; competitiveness issues with respect to educational training and

scientific research on the international market; issues of making education compatible with European standards related to the curriculum and legislation).

Analyses made by various internal and external observers concluded that, although the conceptual elaboration of the reform components has been a clear success, the horizontal communication, the strategic coherence and cooperation between institutions playing educational parts remain, however, a problem. The study of impact on curricula reforms "School at Crossroads" (Vlăsceanu, 2002) confirms the fact that reform was achieved rather through "mobilization", in a mandatory and uniform way - from top to bottom, without the support and participation of other actors involved or affected by these changes. However, participation in education and professional training community programs re-presents one of the main ways by which institutional change was generated.

Now, a New Law of Education (2011) it was adopted and the Romanian society and especially the people connected to Romanian Educational System has already protested against this law that concern the aspects about the institutional management. Obviously, the actual practices are not relevant from the perspectives of a changing society, community and persons (Herczynski, 2005). But, on the other hand, the present preoccupation concerning the adaptation for the public, competition on the market and the organizational efficiency cannot face, in time, the challenges of globalization (Țăranu, A.M., 2009).

The institutional analysis. The research methodology

The institutional analysis aims to draw the institutional profile of the school in order to identify those elements from the external and internal medium of the organization which can facilitate the necessity of localization and educational globalization, and also an optimum balance between these.

SWOT Analysis

The main aim of SWOT analysis is to identify the key elements in the orga-nization's medium that can affect its existence. This way the evaluation of the organization's status is being monitored as well as its orientation direction and the way in which the actual orientation is strategically useful (Panagiotou, 2003). The analysis consists in identifying the Strengths and the Weaknesses of the orga-nization together with the Opportunities and the Threats in the organization's medium. Once these elements identified, it becomes possible to devise some strategies based on strengths, eliminating weaknesses, exploiting opportunities and counterattacking threats. Strengths and Weaknesses are identified at the internal level of the organization while Opportunities and Threats belong to an external analysis level of the organization. The analysis at the external level is

centered on the organization's medium and is made, as in the case of PEST scheme which I have chosen, along political, legal, economic, social and techno-logical axes.

The present research has employed an institutional analysis survey with seven open questions:

1. Which are, in your opinion, the strengths (the advantages) of the school where you work in relation with the present research[3]?

2. Which are the concrete elements (recognized achievements) on which you base your previous answer? If there is no evidence for them, how have you come to consider these aspects possible advantages or starting points?

3. What seems to be the problem or would need improvement in your school in connection with the present research?

4. Which are the concrete aspects you had in mind when you identified the disadvantages or the difficulties? If there is no evidence for them, how do you think that you can point them out?

5. Which are, in your opinion, the internal and external conditions which can favor the development of the present opportunities in your school in connection with the present research?

6. Which could be, in your opinion, the (internal and external) threats your school may face in the future and the obstacles which might prevent the de-velopment of the afore mentioned opportunities?

7. Taking into account the afore analyzed elements, we would like you to identify the main objectives your school should assume or the challenges it should face in order to develop the opportunities and surpass the barriers? We would like you to point them out.

Application procedure

When applied, SWOT analysis covers the following stages: (a) establishing the working group, (b) identifying the analysis items, (c) structuring SWOT matrix, (d) arranging SWOT items according to priorities and (e) devising the strategies.

(a) Establishing the working group

Generally speaking, SWOT can be used by individuals or consultants who get the necessary information by interviewing the members of the organisation. A survey with seven open questions has been applied to the managerial staff of the educational institution included in the sample. The sample consisted in 101

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[3] the extent to which the school can support change and development both at a local and at a global level.

educational institutions from the rural and urban space, including elementary schools, theoretical high schools and vocational high schools from 8 counties of the country and having the following distribution:

Table 1. *The distribution of the educational institutions in the sample*

	Rural	Urban
Elementary schools	31	33
Theoretical high schools and vocational high schools	-	37

(b) Identifying the analysis items

The respondents were asked to identify items for each SWOT constituent and to justify their choice.

(c) The structure of the SWOT matrix

One of the major problems of the SWOT analysis is its production of a large number of items, which determine difficulties of the survey and a difficult interpretation of the data. These difficulties impose a hierarchy of the results who is merely not possible always (Hill & Westbrook, 1997).

Data analysis brought out a big number of SWOT analysis items, thus they needed to be divided (codified) into categories in order to allow a data analysis (Jackson, Joshi & Erhardt, 2003). The items have been structured through analyzing and codifying the answers to the open questions using the following dimensions (codes families – chart 2):

Table 2. *The dimensions used to codify the answers to the open questions*

STRENGTHS /WEAKNESSES	Human resources (teachers, students) Infrastructure Curricula Management
Opportunities (O) **Threats (T)**	Politico-legal **(PEST)** Economic Socio-cultural Technologic

(d) Priority Categorization of SWOT items

After the codification, in order to make possible the data interpretation, we relied on the qualitative evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses and of the opportunities and threatens at a bi-dimensional scale, thus resulting a hierarchy of items in accordance with the priorities, frequencies and consequences (chart 3):

Table 3. *Priority Categorization of SWOT items*

		Frequency			
		High		**Low**	
CONSEQ UENCES	**High**	3/ -3	Frequent situation, with major implications	2/ -2	Contextual situation, but with maxim implications
	Low	1/ -1	Frequent situation, but with minor implications	0	Contextual situation with minor effects

Each identified SWOT item is evaluated qualitatively in accordance with the implied consequences and the existent chances in order to transform a threat into an opportunity or a weakness into a strength. There have been attributed positive symbolic values for the strength and opportunities items (from 0 to 3) while for the weaknesses and threatens items the values were negative (from 0 to –3), thus resulting a value scale from –3 to 3 for the internal factors (strengths and weaknesses), respectively for the external ones (opportunities and threatens). The categorization of SWOT items from the magnitude point of view helps to identify the relations between different factors and to obtain an overview of the problematic.

(e) Elaborating the strategies

The last stage of SWOT analysis is to identify and formulate the alternative strategies. The method itself does not suggest a specific algorithm for strategy development, offering only an overview of the subjects that have to be approached during these strategies. In order to have a whole picture of this image we have used TOWS matrix (chart 4) that allows formulating strategies by connecting the internal factors with the external ones.

Table 4. *TOWS Matrix, after Dyson (2004)*

	Strengths (S)	**Weaknesses (W)**
Opportunities (O)	Strategies SO	Strategies WO
Threatens (T)	Strategies ST	Strategies WT

Each of the four types of strategies is the result of four intersection points:

SO: to maximize the external and the internal strengths of the organization;

WO: to maximize the external and the internal weaknesses;

ST: to minimize the external and the internal strengths threatens;

WT: to minimize the external and the internal.

Data presentation and interpretation

The local-global balance in the profile of the elementary schools. Possible strategies

The standard of education and the stability of the staff represent the strengths of these schools. It has been often affirmed that the fact the teachers take part into training courses represents an important factor in actual and future development for some efficient local and global strategies, but the situation is variable: even if it does not happen very often, there are some schools where the insufficient qualified staff, the small number of teachers as well as the deficiencies in accessing the reference documents or even the old form of curricula not adapted to the new standards, all these represent important weaknesses. The previsions for future show that the low salaries will influence teachers to show lack of interest for their activity, and consequently this will be one of the fundamental threats. The performances of the students at the Olympiads and international contests, invoked by some schools are shadowed by a weakness and a major threaten at the same time – the students' lack of interest towards education by skipping classes or abandoning school. The diversification of the extracurricular activities, as clubs, circles, journals, contests etc on specific national subjects but also on global and European ones, represents an important strength. This is related to the participation in diverse partnership educational programs with other institutions or NGOs. But, the weakness refers to the reduced number of these activities due to the lack of time (in order to be fulfilled many of the extra curriculum activities affect the current activities of the students). The diversification and the adaptation of the curriculum offer to the community's needs, represents a strength in the case of a relative small number of schools. This situation is explained by two frequent major weaknesses: the conservatism and the lack of cooperation between the teachers; the positive attitude towards changes is associated with the young teachers and it is considered strength only in a contextual way.

Strength is represented by the material basis of the school, modern equipment, large library, access to Internet, sufficient spaces for educational activities, sportive activities or other applications. But the situation is variable, many schools accuse the fact that these resources are insufficient and the old ones are deteriorated. From the managerial point of view, the positive or negative reasons for localization or globalization have a low frequency; there are invoked strengths as the agreements of partnership, especially the international ones, with institutions/schools, the promotion of the school's image and initiatives at the local level (own NGO), or weaknesses as the accession of the extra budgetary funds.

The processed data in the *TOWS matrix* (the maximization of the strengths and opportunities and the minimization of the weaknesses and threatens), lead to the

following *possible organizational strategies of localization and educational globalization:* (1) The development of the cooperation/partnership networks at the local and institutional level, on the basis of experience and gathered expertise. This strategy would intensify and use strengths as the professionalism and the stability of the teaching staff of the school, the students' participation into local and international contests, the diversification of extracurricular activities, good equipment, and the promotion of the school's image at the local and international level. Also, the strategy could be favored by the opportunities such as: a fixed and flexible school legislation that allows the autonomy from the administrative and financial point of view, the local community's interest in school, the access for the international funding programs, the access to the global information and the opportunities offered for computer teaching and learning; (2) Entering the educational market ICT. This strategy would use the strengths of school and a series of facilities offered by the legislative system (autonomy), the support from the local authorities, the financial support from the private sector, access to the global information and the opportunities offered for the computer teaching and learning, in order to develop educational programs ICT for all the interested people (children, teenagers, adults), and in partnership (local and global network); (3) The development of the educational offer (of elective and extracurricular courses) in order to localize and globalize it. In the circumstances of rising autonomy at the curriculum level and of balancing the time resources, the school could use the existent strengths in order to minimize the action of some threatens such as: the poor cooperation with the local community and families, the students' lack o interest in school, the competition on the educational market, the bad influence (violence) of the extra school medium, the reduced access to the global information; (4) The development of an organizational culture focused on changing and development. A series of weaknesses of the school as the insufficient informational training for the teaching staff, the lack of interest, the conservatism, the lack of cooperation, the communication deadlock, the small number of the different optional offers, could be minimized if there are provided financial and training opportunities through an efficient, participative, strategic management, focused on development both at the local and institutional level; (5) The promotion and the improvement of the school's image in collaboration with the local authorities, by mobilizing the local community. The opportunities offered by the support from the local communities, the community's interest in school and the professionalism of the teaching staff could change the school's image for the community and the financial situation (by accessing the extra budgetary funds); (6) The promotion and the improvement of the school's image focused on the accession of the human resources (teaching staff and students). The improvement of the school's status and image in society and local community with other actors' support could stimulate the interest of the teaching staff for personal training could persuade students to be more interested in school.

The local-global balance between the profile of the high schools and vocational high schools. Possible strategies

The main strengths invoked by the managers of the secondary schools institutions mostly refer, to the training of the teaching staff, a good material base, a varied curriculum offer and adapted to the needs from the labor market (for the vocational high schools), as well as the managerial performances illustrated by the signed partnerships and applications for the different educational training forms.

In accordance with the respondents, the weaknesses of the secondary schools, are represented by the teaching staff' deficit of competence in fields as class management, interpersonal communication, conflict mediation etc; the deteriorated material base, the spaces, the IT and the practice tools which are not in accordance with the EU's regulations; students' lack of interest. The weaknesses are mentioned briefly: the insufficient developed entrepreneurial education in the curriculum offer, the managerial staff' incondite training for strategic management and partnership development, as well as the access to global education through Internet. As for the external conditions which can impose a positive evolution to the localization, respectively to the globalization, at the secondary schools level, the main stress refers to the rising financial, administrative and even curriculum autonomy of the school, to a legislation that facilitates the starting and the development of the social partnership with the economic agents, as well as on the high trained human resources. The central localization of the school represents also a decisive factor for the respective schools in the competition from the labor market and the accession for the extra budgetary funds.

The main *threats* identified by a significant proportion of the respondents refer to the decrease number of the students, the sub financing from the state budget, the vicious school legislation which makes difficult the institution's activity, the low teaching attractiveness for the good students and the low interest in learning of the community (inclusively of the local authorities) and of the parents. Less frequently, but with high consequences at the school level, we can identify conditions that depend on the local economic insecurity and implicitly the lack of private financing or the financial deficiencies of the student's family; the phenomenon of the transborder migration that affects the familial medium, with bad consequences upon the children; the deficiencies of the education reform – the incoherence of the central and regional managerial strategy, the reduce level of autonomy, unrealistic deadlines for the reform implementation, an unattractive educational offer for community, a stuffed curricula and nor adapted to the recent evolutions, an inadequate system of evaluation (the admittance examination) that ignores the abilities, an inadequate system of evaluation and training of the teaching staff in relation with the new curricula, the lack of interest of the teaching staff and the students, the reduced access to the information concerning the labor market and the graduate students.

The data presented above, worked in the *TOWS matrix* (the maximization of the strengths and opportunities and the minimization of the weaknesses and threatens), generate the following *possible organizational strategies for the educational localization and globalization*: (1) The development of an educational cooperation and partnership network at the local and international level on the basis of the existent experience. The existent resources in the school – the professionalism of the teaching staff, the managers and the good material base and the school's prestige reflected by the human resources and the performances of the students in competitions, can be developed within some educational networks and some local and global training. In this sense, a positive evolution could be favored by conditions such as the growth of the financial, administrative and curricula autonomy of the school, a legislation which stimulates the social partnership with the economic agents, the community's material and financial support, the access to the international funding programs, the access to the global information and the opportunities offered by ICT; (2) The development of the services for the community (entering the educational market with new learning forms in order to fulfill the need of permanent education). The strengths of the secondary schools included in the sample could constitute important premises foe such a strategy, in the condition of the opportunities offered by the institutional autonomy, the professionalism of the teaching staff, the existence of the coherent programs of economic development and services at the local and regional level, the awareness for the permanent education of the graduate students and the existence of a competition on the educational market; (3) An organizational culture oriented towards the development could be the solution for minimizing some important weaknesses as the deficit of competence of the teaching staff in fields such as the class management, interpersonal communication, conflict mediation, etc. the defective managerial staff for the strategic management and for the development of the partnerships as well as the students' lack of interest in educational activities, in the context of the facilities offered by the law favorable to the autonomy and competence on the educational market; (4) The development of the educational offer in order to adapt it to the specific and actual needs of the students consists in localizing and globalizing the support and the learning modalities. The present strengths in the field of the material human resources could be used in order to minimize some threats, the unattractive curriculum offer for the students and community, stuffed and not adapted to the recent evolutions at the local and global level on the labor market and at the scientific level and an evaluation system that ignores the abilities of the students; (5) The promotion at the local and regional level in order to access the material and financial resources, valuable human resources and students. The promotion of the school's image at the local and regional level through the gained performances can diminish the effects of the risks generated by the decreasing number of school population, the low attractiveness of the high school education for the valuable graduate students,

the low interest of the community in school and the teaching staff' lack of interest in school because of the low salaries; (6) The promotion of the school at the local and regional level in order to access financial and material resources, the valuable human resources and students. Promoting the image of the school at the regional and local level through the gained performances, can diminish the effects of some risks generated by the decreasing number of the school population; (7) The participation within some coalitions at the local and regional level (other schools, economic agents, authorities, NGOs) for the cultural, social and economic durable development. This strategy assumes the exploitation of the school's function within a larger network of some coherent programs of local and regional development, thus minimizing the redundancies represented by the degraded material bases and insufficient for the practical instruction, the reduced visibility of the entrepreneurial education in the curriculum offer, the reduced access to the global information, the lack of a curriculum adapted to the labor market, the local economic insecurity and the deficiencies generated by the strategies of implementing the education reform; (8) The development of the ways of communication and cooperation with the families of the students focus on overcoming some weaknesses and major threats such as the students' lack of interest in school, the low involvement of the families in the school education problematic, the solving of some teenagers specific problems, aspects concerning school and the vocational high school career in accordance with their abilities.

Conclusions

The institutional analyses accomplished for the 101 schools included in the sampling draws a varied organizational medium, a variable potential of the Romanian compulsory institutional education for a long term relevant education and a rather instrumental/functional conception upon localization and globalization. The internal and external conditions, which offer an advantage or, on the contrary, block the localization and globalization at the school level, emphasize their dependence to a relevant professional training of the teaching and managerial staff (upgraded, in accordance with the new tendencies and the new educational logic), financial stimulation, material and financial resources and a legal status favorable to the institutional autonomy and social partners.

The analysis reports highlight Strengths such as the good qualifications of the teaching and management staff, the continuity in their teaching positions, the performances of students in international competitions, a good infrastructure, a diverse curriculum in keeping with labour market demands (for the vocational schools) and management performances like establishing partnerships and applications for various educational and learning programs. However, these Strengths are overshadowed by numerous Weaknesses identified in the internal medium of

the educational institution or by long-term Threats generated or increased by unfavourable external conditions: the students' increasing lack of interest in school reflected in truancy and school abandonment, the fluctuation and low degree of training of part of the teaching staff in some schools, the curriculum inadequacy to the present needs and to students' daily reality, the small number of extra-curricular activities due to an overloaded curriculum, the conservatism and lack of cooperation of the teaching staff regarding changes in the school-community relation, the insufficient competence of the teaching staff in class management, interpersonal communication, conflict mediation, etc., the management staff's deficient training in strategic management, the under financing of education by the state budget and the subsequent inadequate payment, the faulty educational legislation which hinder the activity of the institution, the insufficiency of the educational system regarding the undergraduates with performances. Less frequent but with important consequences on the institution are the conditions related to local economic insecurity or financial difficulties in the students' families; the migration phenomenon which affects families; deficiencies related to the reform in the educational system – the lack of coherence in the central and local management strategy, unrealistic deadlines regarding the implementation of the reform, a faulty system of student assessment (the entering examinations) which ignores the student's aptitudes, a faulty system of teacher assessment and refresher courses as against the new curriculum. As for Opportunities which could lend a positive evolution to educational institutions, the focus is on the increasing of financial, administrative and even curricular autonomy of the educational institution, on a legislation which aid the initiation and development of social partnerships as well as on well-trained human resources.

The medium represents one of the major factors that make the difference, the schools from the rural space being evidently deprived from the context and resources point of view, and their potential is evaluated in a rather pessimistic way. This image strongly contrasts with the advantages and opportunities of the schools from the urban space and also with the "exaggerate" optimism in evaluating the proper potential. The access for – financial, material and human resources – sufficient and valuable, represents the main factor invoked as a favorable condition, or by contrary, unfavorable for the institutional development and the increase of the education quality. In this sense, the urban space, the central location of the school, the access for the governmental and international funding programs, the exchanges and the educational cooperation at the European level, the presence of the regional development programs, represent strengths and opportunities characteristic to the localization strategies, respectively the educational globalization at the school level. The proximity of the city, especially that of Bucharest – in case of some rural schools, is associated to higher chances to access the information and financing programs, and, at the same time, it represents a strength in establishing the teaching staff and attracting the students.

The preoccupation for localization and globalization represents rather a managerial characteristic than an educational dimension. As we can draw a conclusion from this analysis, the Romanian education is still framed in a traditional paradigm, with vague preoccupations for the individualization of education – in the cases of the secondary schools, at a big distance from assuming the localization during the learning-teaching processes. In the case of the rural schools, the local community represents at most a support and very rarely a beneficiary or a client – in the case of the secondary schools (the vocational high schools). The position of the school towards the community is a passive one, thus there are few situations when we can find real preoccupations for promoting the school's image and constructing an educational offer (services) addressed to the community and viable on the educational market. Approaching the secondary schools, due to a direct connection with the labor market, is favorable to the localization through partnerships with the economic agents and local authorities. But, even in this case, the position is a passive one, the school being preoccupied more with the adaptation to the market than the development and innovation. On the other hand, the development of international educational partnerships is a dominant orientation for urban schools and high schools, due to the benefits that such exchanges and cooperation have within the organizational and curricular development plan, promotion as a successful institutional model, as well as the development of Rhetoric on the European dimension of education. In contrast to this position, the potential of rural schools on educational globalization is nonexistent or unsatisfactory, most of the times this dimension in school education being totally ignored.

Organizational strategies for locating and educational globalization that we have developed for each school type show that the integration of these dimensions, along with individualization, in a holistic view of education, depends especially on the availability of opportunities and little on existing strengths. These opportunities are given by the skills and active involvement of the teachers and management staff, the existence of school policies meant to provide for the possibility of differentiating educational offers by customization, localization and globalization, as well as integrating these policies into a coherent strategy for educational development and human resources at regional and local levels. We underline, on the very end, the main strategic directions for the Romanian school developmnet as they are emerge from our analysis: the development of an educational cooperation and partnership network at the local and international level on the basis of the existent experience; the development of the educational offer in order to adapt it to the specific and actual needs of the students consists in localizing and globalizing the support and the learning modalities.; the development of an organizational culture focused on changing and development; the promotion and the improvement of the school's image in collaboration with the local authorities, by mobilizing the local community; the promotion of the school

at the local and regional level in order to access financial and material resources, the valuable human resources and students; the participation within some co-alitions at the local and regional level (other schools, economic agents, authorities, NGOs) for the cultural, social and economic durable development.

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